



North American Falconers' Association

February 17, 2011

Testimony presented to the Environment Committee
In Support of Senate Bill 827 (Raised)

On behalf of our many members in the great State of Connecticut and across the country, the North American Falconers' Association asks for your approval of Senate Bill 827, "An Act Concerning Falconry".

Many years ago I was privileged to work with citizens of Connecticut who were seeking legalization of falconry. Through the efforts of these people and the efforts of foresighted legislators falconry became a reality in Connecticut and regulations governing falconry were promulgated fulfilling the intent of the General Assembly. Today these same individuals are allowed to participate in this wonderful and exciting outdoor activity whose traditions pre-date recorded history.

November 16, 2010 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) added falconry, an ancient and traditional hunting method to its *List of the Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity*. One of the traditions and heritages of falconry is to be able to capture, train and hunt in partnership with a wild bird of prey (in this case a red tailed hawk).

Only the State of Connecticut does not currently allow the acquisition of a bird from the wild by resident falconers. All other states allow, and in some cases for new falconers, *require* the acquisition of a bird from the wild for use in falconry. Most birds taken from the wild will eventually be returned to the wild. Falconers are only allowed (*Federal regulation*) to acquire juvenile (non breeding) birds.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service, a division of the United States Department of the Interior, and the overall regulatory agency for falconry in the United States has formally issued a *Finding of No Significant Impact (Attachment 1)* regarding falconry. This finding is based on biology and science and not on supposition and unsupported claims.

Regarding allowing falconers to hunt with their birds on Sunday during lawful seasons, this is reasonable and is consistent with hunting regulations in practically every other state throughout the country. Falconers have no impact on game populations. More game animals are killed in a single day on the roadways of a single county in the State than all falconers combined would take in an entire season. This is also about choice. Citizens of Connecticut have the choice of participating in an outdoor activity or other sporting activity on Sunday. You can play golf, fish, play tennis or bicycle or participate in almost any other activity if you chose to do so any day of the week. Falconers should be allowed the choice during lawful seasons to hunt with their birds.

The North American Falconers' Association wholeheartedly supports Senate Bill 827 and requests your support and approval to move this bill forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wm. L. Dickerson", written in a cursive style.

Wm. L. "Larry" Dickerson, President
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FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Take of Raptors from the Wild for use in Falconry and Raptor Propagation

Concurrent with proposed changes in the regulations governing falconry and raptor propagation in the United States, we considered three alternatives in preparing an Environmental Assessment of the effects of take of raptors from the wild for use in falconry and in raptor propagation. The alternatives considered were the following.

1. Take limits for falconry would not be established. Neither the dual federal/state permitting system for falconry nor the permitting system for raptor propagation would be changed. This is the no-action alternative.
2. Establish national take levels of concern for take of raptor species, based on the published data for, and biology of, each species; no change in falconry or captive propagation permitting. Under this alternative, we would base allowed take on published data and evaluations of the effect of take of falconry and raptor propagation. Harvest of juvenile raptors from the wild would be limited to levels that would not harm wild populations. Neither the dual federal/state permitting system for falconry nor the permitting system for raptor propagation would be changed.
3. Establish national take levels of concern for take of raptor species based on the published data for, and biology of, each species; eliminate federal permitting for falconry by delegating such authority to the states within the boundaries of a clear federal framework; no change in the captive propagation regulations that would impact take of raptors from the wild. This is the preferred alternative. We would base allowed take on published data and evaluations of the effect of take for falconry and raptor propagation. Harvest of juvenile raptors would be limited to levels that would not harm wild populations. The current permitting for raptor propagation would be maintained.

Having reviewed comments from the public and from federal and state agencies on the draft Environmental Assessment, we prepared a Final Environmental Assessment, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act. Our preferred action is application of Alternative 3. The Service has modeled the effects of take for falconry and for propagation, and has determined that in most cases the take is a small fraction of conservative numbers for take that will ensure that the populations remain healthy.

We believe that the conservative take under the preferred alternative we propose will not be discernible in raptor populations. However, the preferred alternative will require periodic evaluations of populations of raptors taken for falconry.

We also believe that effects of this action on wildlife habitats would be very small. We found no likely environmental impacts to air or water quality, to other wildlife populations, or to any other component of the environment.

Based on my review of the enclosed Environmental Assessment and other supporting documentation, I have determined that the proposed take of raptors for use in falconry and in raptor propagation under the conditions outlined above is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102 (2) (C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement on the proposed action is not required.

Dated:



Kenneth Stansell

Signed:
Acting

Director, Fish and Wildlife Service

Reference: Final Environmental Assessment: Take of Raptors from the Wild Under the Falconry and the Raptor Propagation Regulations

